CLARIFICATIONS ON THE STATEMENT BY MINISTER REGARDING IMPORTANT CONCESSION GRANTED UNDER THE INCOME-TAX ACT.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN): Yes, Mr. Jagesh Desai.

SHRI JAGESH DESAI (Maharashtra): Madam, when I learnt the other day that the Minister of Finance was going to make a statement regarding a very important concession, I was very curious and I thought that the Government was going to announce some measures by which some relief could be given to those person who wanted to have some savings. I expected that some sort of concessions would be given. In Gujarati, Madam, there is a saying which means you dig a mountain and produce only a mouse! This statement is like that only. I wanted the Minister to give some concession to mobilise savings and I thought that he would raise the present exemption limit of Rs. 7,000|- on interest, dividends, etc. and I was expecting that he was going to restore it to the original figure of Rs. 13,000|- That was my understanding and so, I was curious. Anyhow, I would like to know one thing from the hon. Minister. It is a good idea to have the National Foundation for Communal Harmony, and the victims of the communal riots will be given some solace from this Foundation.

Madam, I would only ask questions, and I do not want to make a speech. What amount has the Government given as grant-in-aid to this Foundation? Who are the promoters, whether they are Government or outside agencies? Madam, the Finance Minister in his Budget Speech in July, 1991 has flood us that they are going to have this kind of a Foundation. Why did it take so much time? Why could the Government not bring it at the time of the Budget and the Finance Act? I would also like to know when the Society was registered. I think, Madam, after the Finance Minister gave his Budget Speech, one year has passed. And for registering such a society, it does not take time. And if it is a Government society, it can be done within one month. I would like to know about the delay on the part of the Government for registering this society. I think, the Minister will satisfy me on these points. I am happy that 100 per cent deduction will be given under 80G, and that income-tax will not be levied on this Foundation. I am very happy about that. And one could understand it better if the heading had been 'concession under the Income-tax Act', and not 'an important concession'.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN): Shri N. E. Balaram—not present; Shri Gurudas Das Gupta—not present; Shri S. S. Ahluwalia—not present; Shri John F. Fernandes.

SHRI JOHN F. FERNANDES (Goa): Madam Vice-Chairman, we have to congratulate the Government for coming out with this Foundation, though belated. I only want to seek some specific clarifications from the hon. Minister.

Madam, this Foundation will run on the benevolent donations given by the institutions and organisations. So, in order to attract some donations, I think, it is proper to have a proper person as the Chairperson of this Trust. So, may I know from the hon. Minister as to whom they have contemplated to be the Chairman, whether they have contemplated the First Lady or whether they want to have a politician or a Minister to be the Chairperson? I would request t he hon. Minister to see that the scope of this Foundation is enlarged. Madam, this is for giving assistance

to the children. How can we distinguish children from one tragedy to the other? I would like the hon. Minister to include the refugees, the children coming from Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir. These children also will have to be rehabilitated by this Foundation. The children, the victims of natural calamities such as earthquakes and floods should also be included under this. The third thing that I would like to know from the hon. Minister is whether they will request the public sector units, those unit which are making profits, to donate to this Foundation, and whether any grant will be given by the Government to the Foundation.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN): Now, the hon. Minister.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY (Pondicherry): It is a very short statement and only two Members seeking clarifications.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI RAMESHWAR THAKUR): Madam Vice-Chairman, the Society for National Foundation for Communal Harmony was established by the Government, and the Society had been registered on 19th February, 1992, under the Societies Registration Act of 1860. The promoters of this Society are: Shri S B. Chavan, the Home Minister, who is the ex-officio Chairman; Shri Madhav Godbole, Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs; Mr. M. S. Agwani, Vice-Chancellor, Jawaharlal Nehru University; Ms. Usha Vohra, Secretary, Ministry of Welfare, New Delhi; Mr. A. M. Khusro of New Delhi, an eminent person; Shri Anil Bordia, Secretary, Department of Education; and Shri Vinod Dhall, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs. These were the initial founders and members of the Committee. So far as the delay is concerned, yes, there has been some delay. I had asked the same question from the officers of the department. There was a certain degree of consultations about the scope of activities and consultations with the State Governments and ultimately it took a little time and some time was taken in body's formation and drawing up its objects and so on.

The hon. Member asked about the amount of money given by the Government. The Government of India have agreed to give Rs. 10 crores to start with and already a sum of Rs. 1 crore has been sanctioned in the month of March and this money has been deposited in the society's account.

The society has decided to achieve its basic objectives as provided in the constitution. The objects of the society are broad-based and cover a number of things. As the hon. Member asked, there are three basic objectives at the moment. They are, promotion of communal harmony and national integration, strengthening bonds of unity among different communities and thirdly, providing assistance for physical and psychological rehabilitation of the victims of communal violence, particularly for the children with special reference to their care, education and training. It has also been decided to finance and help persons who have been affected after any riots which have taken place after 24th of July 1991. The authorities of the society have gone round and identified some specific areas where such incidents have taken place. They are Ahmedabad, Baroda, Jamnagar, Bharoch in Gujarat, Varanasi, Hapur and Bahraich, Chakradharpur in Bihar, Belgaum in Karnataka and Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh. Details are being obtained with the help of the State Governments and necessary assistance will be provided to the victims of the unfortunate incidents in these places.

[Shri Rameshwar Thakur]

This is the information I wanted to share with the House. If there is any other question, I shall be glad to answer. It is for a noble cause that this society has been established. The Government and the society would seek the co-operation of all the hon. Members. If they have in their knowledge anybody who suffered in these unfortunate incidents, they are requested to convey the information to the Secretary of the society. We shall also be glad to receive any innovative scheme suggested by any hon. Member in this regard.

SHRI JAGESH DESAI: The Government must bring an amendment in this session for giving this exemption.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: I want to know whether children of refugees from Punjab and Kashmir would also be covered.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN): He will consider. Now the House stands adjourned till 11 O'clock tomorrow.

The House then adjourned at five minutes past six of the clock, till eleven of the clock on Tuesday, the 4th August 1992.